

Representing God

Psalm 25:1-7

Quite a few years ago – back when everybody went to church on a Sunday there was a young boy who had been born to an unwed mother. This boy had quite a hard time growing up because he didn't have a father, and where he lived everybody seemed to ask the question, "Who's your father?" when they met him.

So this boy became a bit of recluse, trying to avoid places and situations where people would ask him this question because it hurt him that he couldn't answer it. He would hide at school during recess, he would avoid going into stores, and when he went to church he would slip in late and sneak out early.

However, one Sunday there was a new preacher at his church and because he did things a bit different the boy missed his cue to sneak out early. He tried to slip by the new minister as he was shaking everyone's hand at the door – but the Minister spotted him.

Hey there Son, he reached down to shake his hand, "Who's your father?" he asked, not knowing anything about the boy's situation.

The whole church went quiet, the boy wished the ground would open up and swallow him – now everyone would know the embarrassing answer to that dreaded question.

But the minister could sense something wasn't right, and by the grace of God he continued on...

"Oh wait a minute – I know who you are, I can see the family resemblance now. You're a child of God." With that he patted the boy on the shoulder and said "Son you've got a great inheritance. Go and claim it!"

With that the young boy smiled for the first time in a long time and walked out the door of that church a changed person!

Who is your father?

What is he like? What does he do for work? What sort of reputation did he have? Did he like to laugh? Does he enjoy

spending time with you? Did he teach you how to play baseball or hockey?

A few years ago when we were still living in Toronto my wife told me that one of my daughter's toys had broken but that my daughter hadn't been all that upset about it because as she had said very matter of factly "that's ok daddy's a painter-fixer, he can fix it"

I caught a glimpse of who I was to my little girl – I was her painter-fixer, because that's what she saw me doing the majority of the time. Coming home in my work clothes, full of paint and dust, the car trunk always full of my tools, Painter-fixer

Another time, just before we moved out to Calgary she told me that she wasn't so sure about me becoming a minister – she liked the fact that I was a youth pastor, because all the kids at church thought I was so cool, and fun and by implication so was she – but that might change if we went to another church and I became the minister – she might not have a cool dad anymore.

Who's your father?

I ask this question because who our father is, who we perceive him to be, plays such an important role in our lives and who we become. It shapes us and in a large part determines how we live our lives, and from a faith perspective it shapes how we relate to God.

Was your father emotionally distant and authoritarian – chances are that it's hard for you not to see God in the same way

Was your father unreliable, didn't provide for you – chances are you'll have a hard time trusting God in those areas too.

Did your father have a low opinion of the church, only going when your mother dragged him away from sports on a Sunday – chances are church isn't very important to you either.

Was your father loving, kind, caring and always there for you – chances are its easy for you to understand and believe that God acts towards us in those ways as well.

That's because God created fathers to represent Him. In fact as Christians we have all been given this responsibility

We are therefore Christ's **ambassadors**, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (2 Cor 5:20)

But as Christians we still fulfill other roles in life – being a Christian doesn't mean we stop being employers, or employees or citizens, mothers or fathers. Instead we need to discover what it means to be an ambassador for Christ, a representative of God, in these various roles.

So, Fathers, you are to represent God to your children.

Please hear me correctly, I didn't say that fathers are to *play God* – they are to **Represent God** – there's a big difference, but that's exactly what we need to look at this morning.

So if you are going to represent God as a Father, you first need to know him as **the** Father.

In the scripture God is called Father in two ways – first in a rather loose sense that He is the creator of us all, and there are only a handful of references to this.

Have we not all one **Father** ? Did not one **God** create us? Malachi 2:10

What the small amount of references tells us is that scripture is far more concerned with the second way that God is called Father, which designates Him as the Father of Jesus Christ.

What Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 1:3 “Praise be to the **God** and **Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ” is echoed many times over in the New Testament, God is Father as He is the Father of Christ.

So do you know God as the Father of Christ? What does that mean?

It means that you want to know God in a certain way, a way that was so wonderfully described by King David for us in Psalm 25, a way that in the Old Testament was known as having a Covenant relationship with God.

What was it like being in a Covenant relationship with God?

Well, David describes it. God is....

Someone he can tell how he is feeling – (I lift up my soul)

Someone he can trust in – (in you I trust)

Someone he won't be ashamed of – (Do not let me be put to shame)

Someone who will defend him – (nor my enemies triumph over me)

Someone who will seek justice for him – (put the treacherous to shame)

Someone who will teach him – (show me your ways)

Someone who will show him the truth – (guide me in your truth)

Someone who remembers the love and mercy on which their relationship is founded – (remember your mercy and love)

Someone who will not hold your sin against you – (remember not my sins of my youth)

Someone who loves you (remember me according to your love)

And this is only really scratching the surface – David could go on about God being someone who provides for him, someone who heals him etc...

Now when I read Psalm 25, I thought- I hope this is how my daughter feels about me – not that I want to be God to my daughter, but rather if I, as a Father can allow her to experience all these things in her relationship with me, then she will have the right foundation to grow and understand how the bible describes her relationship with God.

But I can only do that if I can have this kind of relationship with God. I can only represent God as I have experienced God. So that requires I do some soul-searching, and if you want to represent God to your children as Fathers then you should join with me in asking ourselves.

Do we bare our soul to God?

Do we trust God, what actions can you point too that your kids would see that prove it?

Do we stake your reputation on God?

Do we let God defend us?

Do we let God bring about justice?

Do we let God teach us, show us truth?

Do we go back to the love and mercy of God when we mess up?

Do we truly believe God forgives us and loves us?

In all these areas – it's really your actions that show if you do or not, and it's also your actions that your children will see.

Will they see a father who knows the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Because to know God in this way is to know Jesus Christ and to know Jesus Christ is to know God. As Jesus said to his disciples

"Don't you **know me**, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen **me** has seen the **Father**. How can you say, 'Show us the **Father**'? (John 14:9)

Friends, Christ connects us to his Father, not simply because He is the Son but because we need forgiveness. Fathers – we have been charged with representing God to our children, but we must admit that have often failed in this respect.

In asking those questions I'm sure we all found ourselves thinking of times that we really blew it with our kids.

But to know the Father of Jesus Christ is only possible because of the forgiveness that Christ offers, forgiveness for all our failings at representing the Father – for being selfish, cheap, mean, angry, too busy, trying to fix things on our own and the list can go on.

But these failings are precisely where God's grace comes in and forgives.

And Fathers – this is the most important thing you can do in representing God, offer the forgiveness that God provides you in Christ to your children. Freely you have been forgiven – freely forgive so that they might know grace, and seek it from the one you received it from.

Remember you are Representing God; your job is to help them understand and know who God is – that because of their father, they come to know and love their Heavenly Father.

May the grace of Christ empower you to fulfill this calling – Amen.